

ONE HUNDRED YEARS
OF PUBLISHING

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SAMUEL WOOD

[1760 - 1844]

FOUNDER OF THE HOUSE OF WILLIAM WOOD AND COMPANY

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS

OF THE PUBLISHERS



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One Hundred Years of Publishing

[1804-1904]

A Brief Historical Account
of the House of
William Wood and Company

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
WILLIAM WOOD AND COMPANY
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WILLIAM WOOD AND COMPANY

One Hundred Years of Publishing

WHEN a business house has had an uninterrupted existence for a hundred years it is pardonable that its members should feel a certain pride in the fact, and considering that the management has during that time remained solely in the hands of one family, the event is sufficiently unusual to justify the publication of a brief account of it.

The firm of WILLIAM WOOD AND COMPANY is, with the single exception of the Methodist Book Concern, the oldest publishing house in New York. The business was founded early in the year 1804 by Samuel Wood, grandfather of the present senior partner, and great grandfather of the junior members of the firm. Samuel Wood was born at Oyster Bay, Long Island, on July 17th, 1760. Until forty years of age he taught

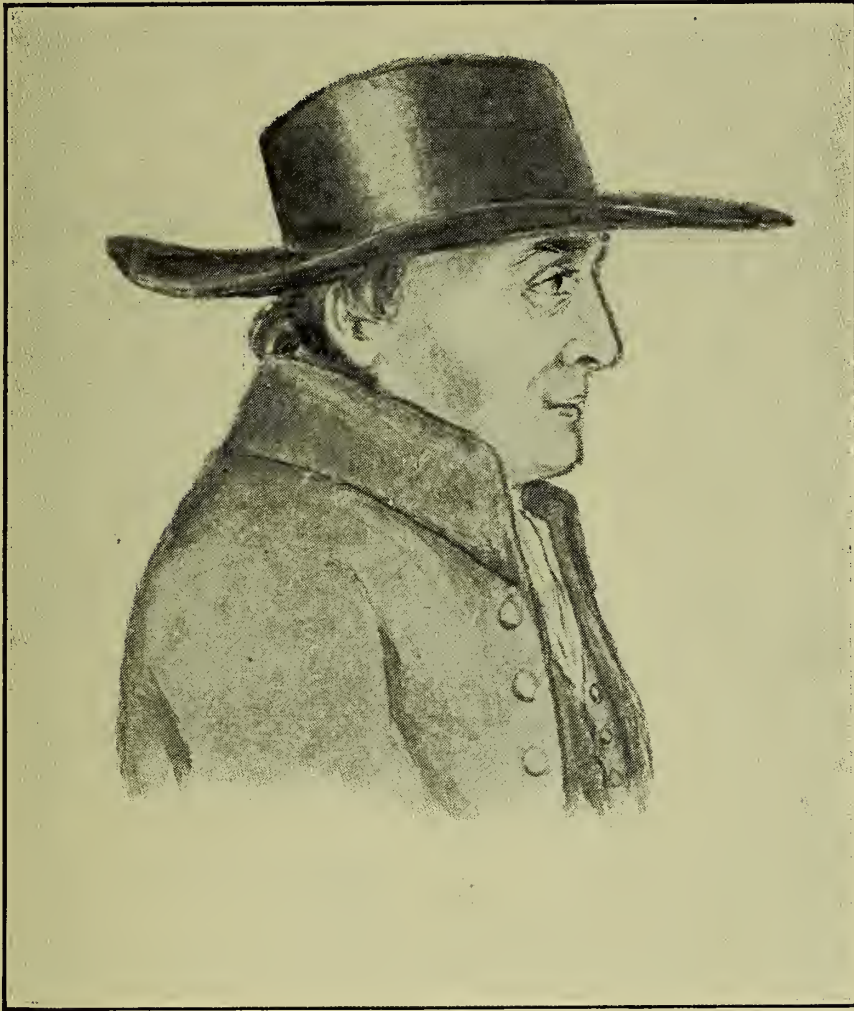
One Hundred Years

school, living at several places, including Hempstead, Long Island, Hibernia Mills and New Rochelle. Finding that school teaching could not produce a sufficient income for the needs of his family, he determined to embark in the business of bookselling, and moved to New York City in December, 1803. His first place of business was at 362, Pearl Street, then the centre of the book trade in New York, where, in the year 1804, he opened a small store for the sale of miscellaneous books, mostly second-hand. Much of his stock was purchased at the auction sales of Robert McMennoy, then held at the corner of Wall and Water streets, opposite the Tontine Coffee House. Paper stock and stationery were also sold, and for a time cotton goods, consigned by Almy & Brown, of Providence, were sold on commission, but proving unprofitable were discarded.

Samuel Wood soon installed a small printing plant in the rear of his store, and began the publication of a long series of primers and juvenile booklets. Believing most of the children's books of the day to be unsuited to youthful readers he

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endeavored to remedy their defects, compiling and writing many of them himself. They were illustrated with copper-plate engravings, both



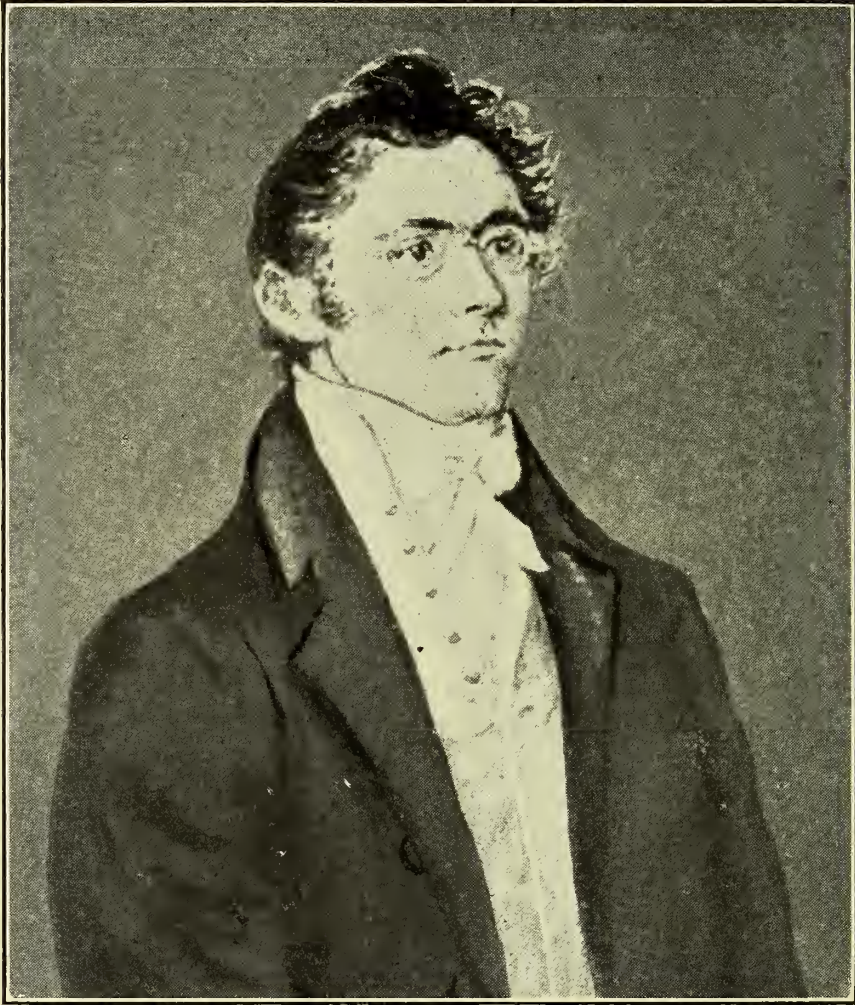
SAMUEL WOOD

(From an Original India-ink Drawing by Dr. Alexander Anderson)

plain and hand-colored, and a little later with wood-engravings by Dr. Alexander Anderson, the “father of American wood engraving,” whose earliest work is found in these little books.

One Hundred Years

Samuel Wood was accustomed to carry his pockets full of them, and to give them to children whom he met.



SAMUEL S. WOOD

The first publication was a little primer, called "The Young Child's A B C, or First Book." It contained 16 pages, and was about three inches square. The imprint is: New York | Samuel Wood | 362 Pearl Street | 1806.

of Publishing

THE
YOUNG CHILD'S
A B C,
OR,
FIRST BOOK.

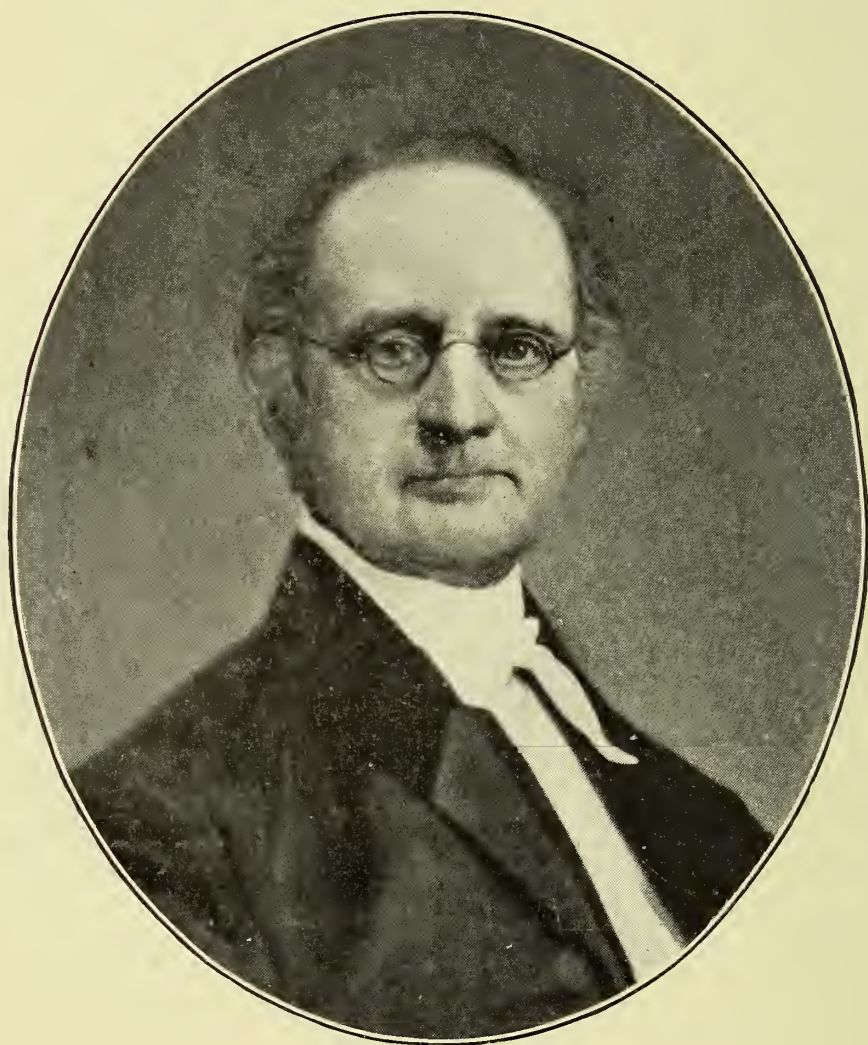


NEW-YORK :
PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL WOOD,
NO. 362 PEARL-STREET.
1806.

FACSIMILE OF TITLE PAGE OF FIRST
PUBLICATION

One Hundred Years

In 1810 Samuel Wood moved to a larger store at 357, Pearl Street, nearly opposite his first place of business. In 1815 he took into partnership two of his sons, Samuel S. and John, and the firm style



WILLIAM WOOD

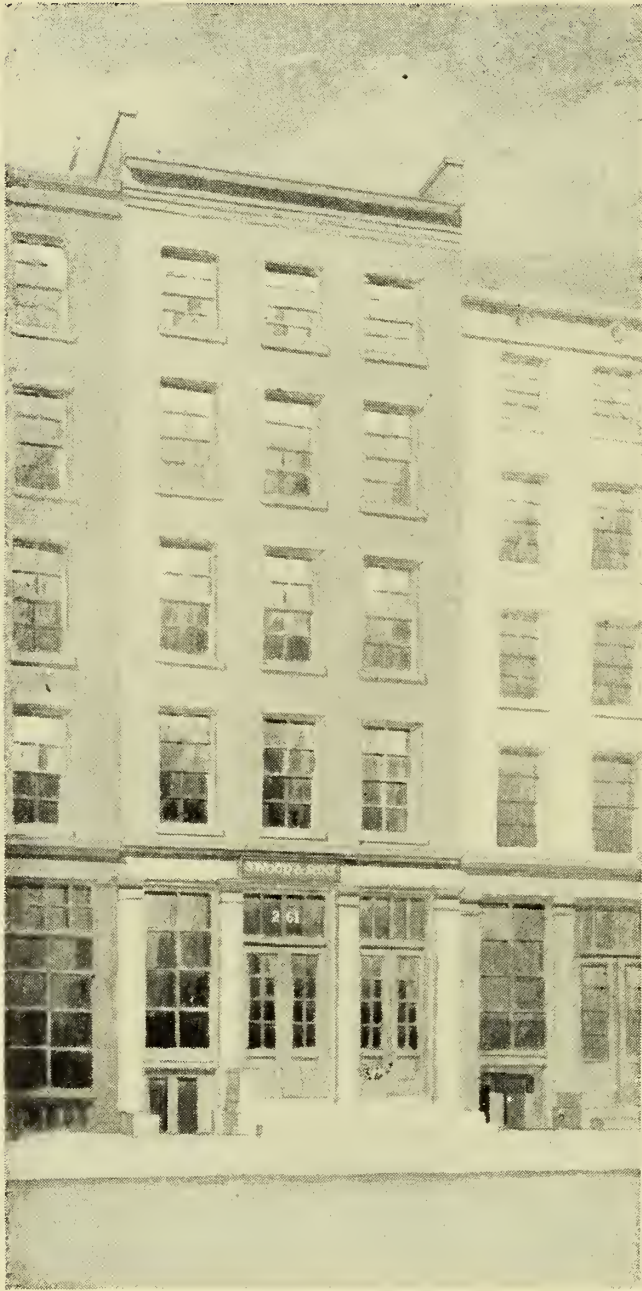
of Samuel Wood & Sons was adopted. A periodical called *The Friend of Peace*, issued under the auspices of the New York Quarterly Meeting of Friends (Quakers), was published at about this time.

of Publishing

An agency of Samuel Wood & Sons was established in 1818 in Baltimore, Md., at 212, Market Street by Samuel S. Wood, and the double imprint is found on the publications of the house for several years following. Baltimore in those days enjoyed a commercial importance much greater proportionately than now, but the venture was not a success and was shortly abandoned.

Samuel Wood & Sons moved once more, in 1817, to 261, Pearl Street, a property owned by Samuel Wood, and another son, William Wood, was admitted to partnership, John Wood retiring. The business had steadily increased from the original trade in miscellaneous and second-hand books to the publication and general sale, both wholesale and retail, of books and general stationery. The "New York Readers," a series of primers, spellers and readers (many of them originally compiled by Samuel Wood himself) were for many years favorite text-books, and up to a comparatively recent time were still published in Philadelphia by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, to whom the plates had been sold.

One Hundred Years



261, PEARL STREET
1817-1856

The new quarters being soon outgrown, the business was removed to temporary accommodations on Fulton Street, while a substantial five-story building was erected at 261, Pearl Street. This building is standing to-day, occupied by S. M. Aikman & Co., dealers in lanterns; when first built it was considered large quarters to be occupied entirely by a bookstore.

William Wood, from the time of his admission to the firm, was especially interested in medical works, and under his influence particular attention was paid to this

of Publishing

class of publications. Results justified this interest, and a considerable part of the new place was soon devoted to them. The store became the resort of the noted physicians of the day—such men as Drs. Mott, Francis, Stevens, Mitchell, Hosack, and others. The medical book canvasser was then unknown—he was not to appear for another fifty years—and physicians were accustomed to “drop in” frequently to examine the new books, nearly all of them imported from England. American medical literature had not then been born.



389, BROADWAY
1856-1861

One Hundred Years

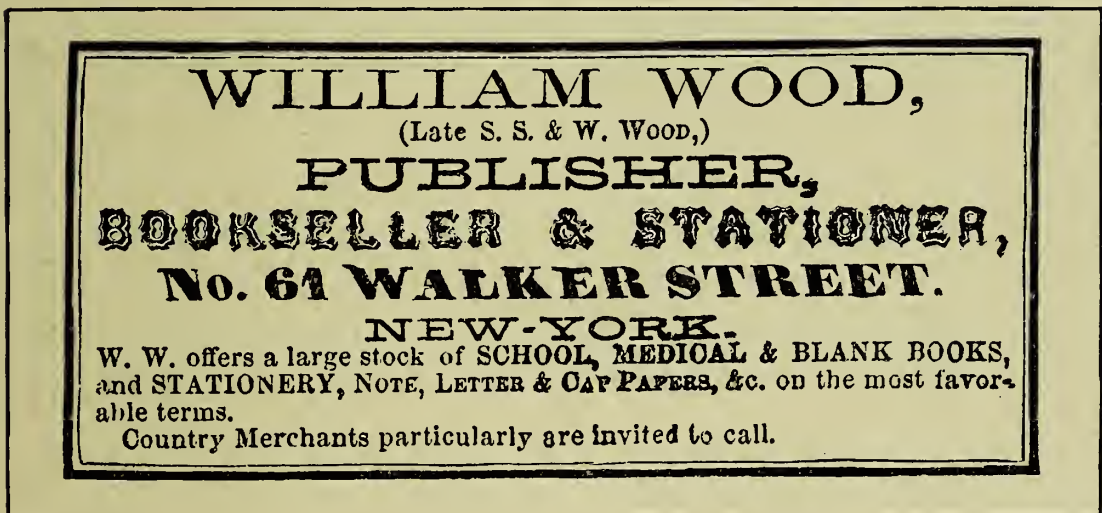
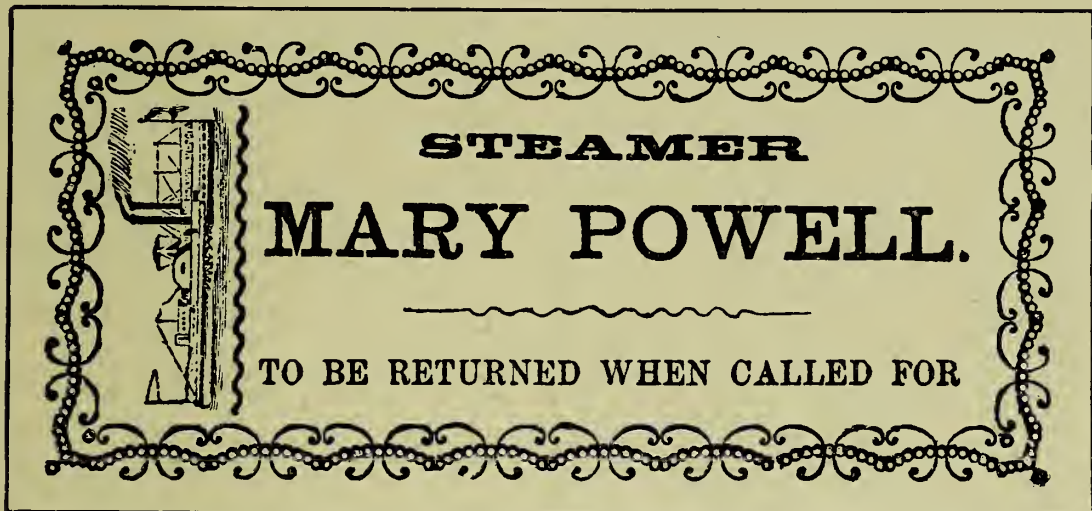
In 1836 Samuel S. and William Wood bought out the interest of their father, Samuel Wood, and he retired from business, the firm becoming Samuel S. & William Wood. For the rest of his life Samuel Wood devoted himself to the public charities which had always interested him. He had taken an active part in founding the House of Refuge, the Bank for Savings, and the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism. The credit for the foundation of the New York Institution for the Blind is due to him and to Dr. Samuel L. Ackerly. He was an active member of the Society of the New York Hospital, the Manumission Society, and other benevolent institutions. He died on May 5th, 1844.

In 1856 the firm removed to 389, Broadway, a three-story brick building, the ground floor of which was used as a salesroom.

About this time some novel means of advertising were employed. One method extensively used was the supplying of steamboat tickets to the various lines running from New York City, the advertisement of the house being printed upon the reverse of the ticket as the considera-

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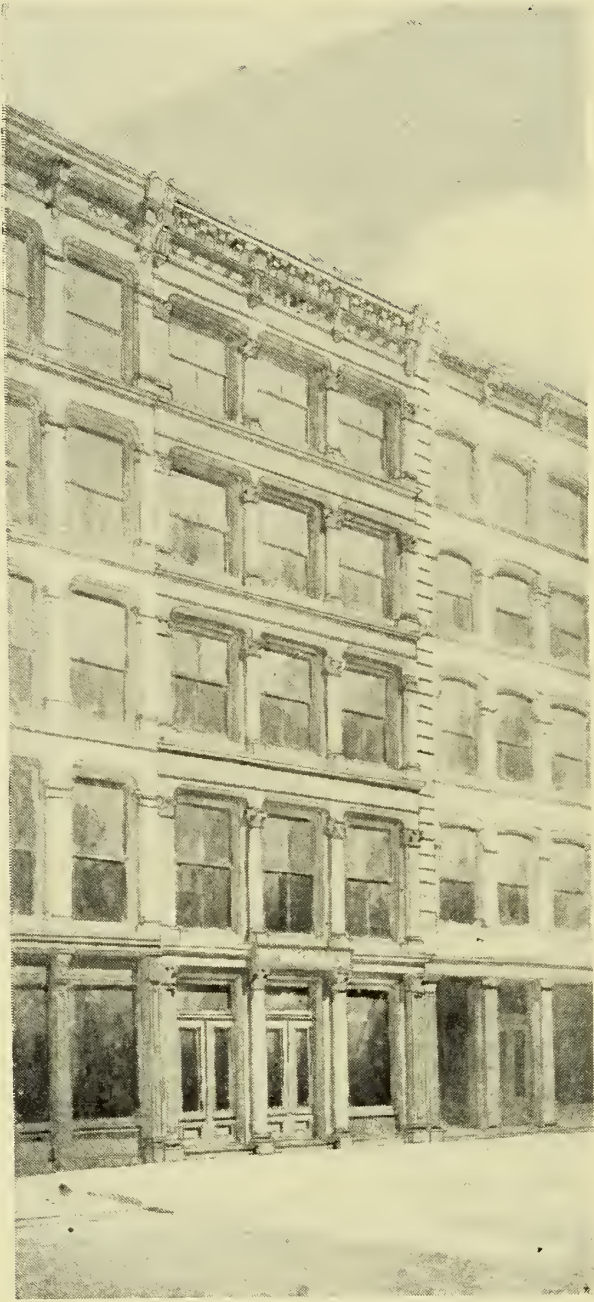
tion. Tickets were regularly supplied to the steamboats *Mary Powell*, *Thomas Powell*, *Cata-*



STEAMBOAT TICKET, WITH ADVERTISEMENT
ON REVERSE SIDE

line, *Oregon*, and others. (A modern instance of a similar practice will readily occur to every one.)

One Hundred Years



61, WALKER STREET
1861-1872

In 1861 Samuel S. Wood died, leaving William Wood alone in the business. For something more than a year William Wood conducted the business under his own name, removing to 61, Walker Street. In 1863 he took into partnership his son, William H. S. Wood, the present head of the house. The style William Wood & Company was then adopted, and has since been retained.

From the time of his admission to the firm Wm. H. S. Wood advocated further specialization in the direction of medical publications, and proceeded, with characteristic energy and good judgment, to develop

of Publishing

the business in this line. The wholesale handling of general stationery supplies was abandoned, as was also the sale of religious and miscellaneous literature, and scientific and medical publications became the chief concern of the house. Numerous medical books by American authors were published, while a complete stock of medical literature in the English language was carried, and sold at wholesale and retail.

In 1865 Mr. Wood conceived the idea of starting a medical journal, to be conducted in the best interests of the medical profession in America, availing of modern methods as regards news, and printing matter of general as well as purely scientific medical interest. Dr. George F. Shrady was secured as editor, and the first number of the *Medical Record* appeared on March 1st, 1866. It was at first published semi-monthly, but soon changed to a weekly, and its sixty-five volumes are a history of medicine in America for the past thirty-eight years. To Dr. Shrady is due the honor of having been its sole editor continuously to July of the present year—a longer term of service than that of any other editor of a medical

One Hundred Years

journal in America. To his ability and good judgment the high standing and position of the *Medical Record* among the medical profession is due. He resigned his position July 1st, 1904, and is succeeded by Thomas L. Stedman, M.D., who has for many years past held the positions of assistant and associate editor.

The *American Journal of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children*, originally founded by Dr. Benjamin F. Dawson in 1869, was purchased by the house, and for many years was under the able editorship of Dr. Paul F. Mundé, and since his retirement, in 1891, of Dr. Brooks H. Wells.

A pharmaceutical trade journal, *New Remedies*, was started in 1872, edited by Dr. F. A. Castle and Mr. Charles Rice, both now deceased. The name of this paper was changed, in 1884, to the *American Druggist*. It was sold to its present publishers in 1892. Several other medical journals of less importance and principally of a special character have at various times been published.

William Wood retired from active business in 1868, thereafter spending most of his time at his country place at Mount Kisco, until his death, on April 9th, 1877.

of Publishing

In 1872 the firm moved once more to the iron-front building at 27, Great Jones St.

On the retirement of William Wood, in 1868, Wm. H. S. Wood took into partnership Isaac F. Wood, also a grandson of Samuel Wood, and Alfred S. Griffiths, who for some years had been "head clerk"; the only member of the firm at any time who was not a Wood and a member of the family. Isaac F. Wood's interest was bought out at the end of three years. Mr. Griffiths' interest was bought out in 1884.

In 1881 the retail and jobbing department was



27, GREAT JONES STREET
1872-1882

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sold to Joseph H. Vail, who had been in charge of that branch of the business for many years, and



56 AND 58, LAFAYETTE PLACE
1882-1892

the house has since that time confined its operations entirely to the sale of its own publications.

of Publishing

The place of business was moved once more in 1882 to the old Langdon mansion at 56 and 58, Lafayette Place, where for ten years the firm had



43, 45, AND 47, EAST TENTH STREET
1892-1899

what were probably the handsomest offices occupied by any publishing house in this country. The business removed in 1892 to quarters in the building at Nos. 43, 45, and 47, East Tenth

One Hundred Years

Street. In 1899 still another move was made to the old White residence, No. 51, Fifth Avenue,

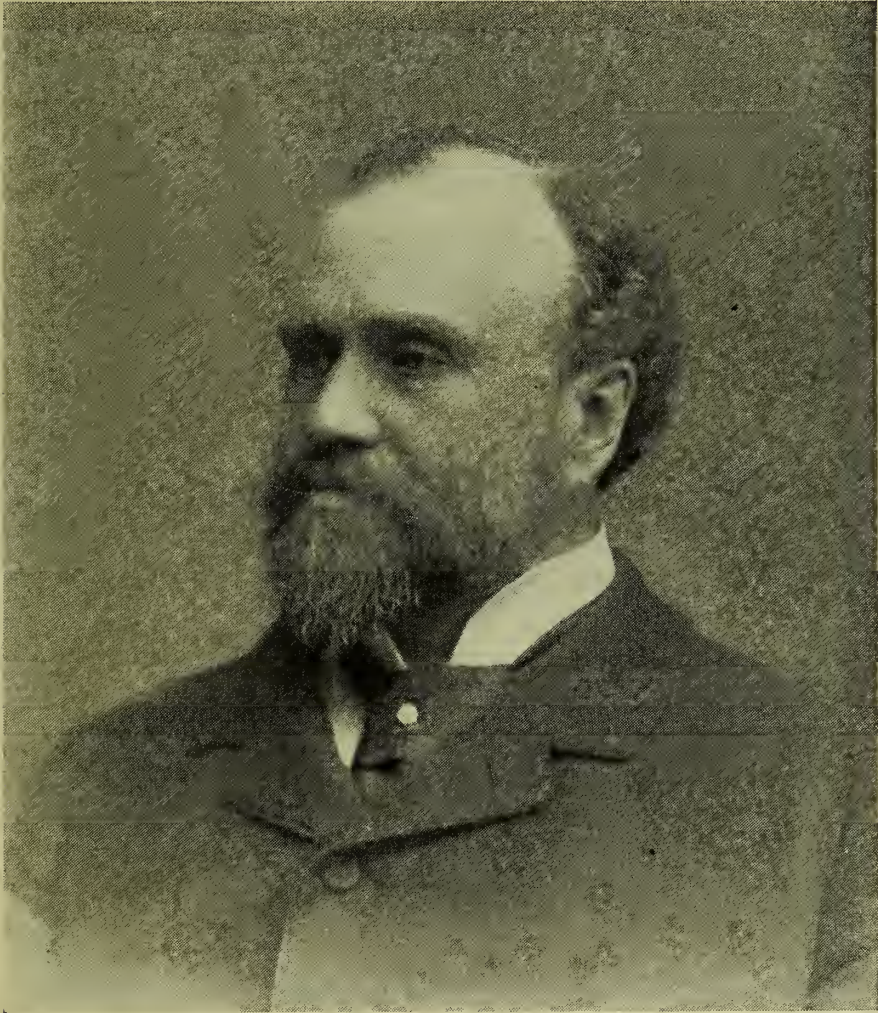


51, FIFTH AVENUE—PRESENT TIME

at the southeast corner of Twelfth Street, the quarters now occupied.

of Publishing

The firm at the present time is composed of William H. S. Wood, and his three sons. These were admitted to partnership—William C. Wood



WILLIAM H. S. WOOD

in 1890; Gilbert C. Wood in 1892, and Arnold Wood in 1896. For nearly twenty years Mr. David S. Taber has been cashier and confidential clerk.

One Hundred Years

A few words regarding the more important publications of the house may not be amiss.

In the earlier years a large number of books on religious subjects were published. The first American edition of Fox's "Book of Martyrs" (1810) had nearly five thousand subscribers before publication, their names all duly listed in the back of the volume, as was customary at the time.

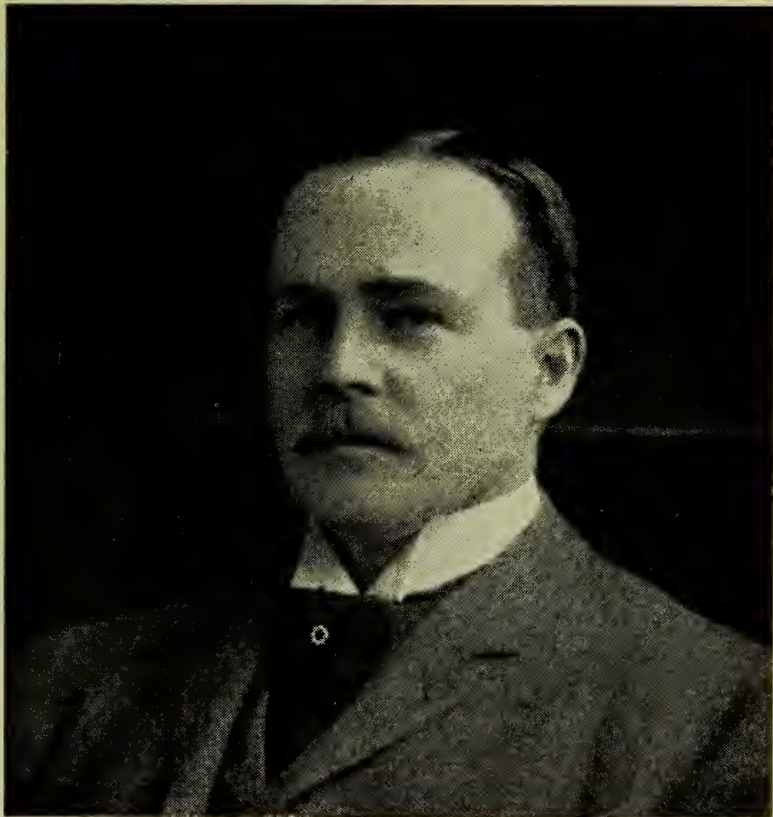
The publication of Brown's Series of English Grammars was begun in 1823, and is still continued. For the space of two generations these books were the standard grammars, and were used almost exclusively. Curiously enough, the trend of modern methods is beginning to turn again to classic style in teaching, and Brown's Grammars are still amongst the most popular text-books upon the subject.

The most important medical publication in earlier days was Mott's "Velveau's Surgery," in three ponderous volumes and quarto Atlas, under date of 1847.

In 1874 the house commenced the publication of the largest medical work hitherto issued in the English language, a translation of Ziemssen's

of Publishing

“Cyclopedia of the Practice of Medicine,” in twenty-two royal octavo volumes. By special arrangement with the German publishers, advance sheets were sent to this country and trans-



WILLIAM C. WOOD

lated under the supervision of Dr. Albert H. Buck. This great collection of treatises marked the most important advance in the history of medicine up to this time. In another way the

One Hundred Years

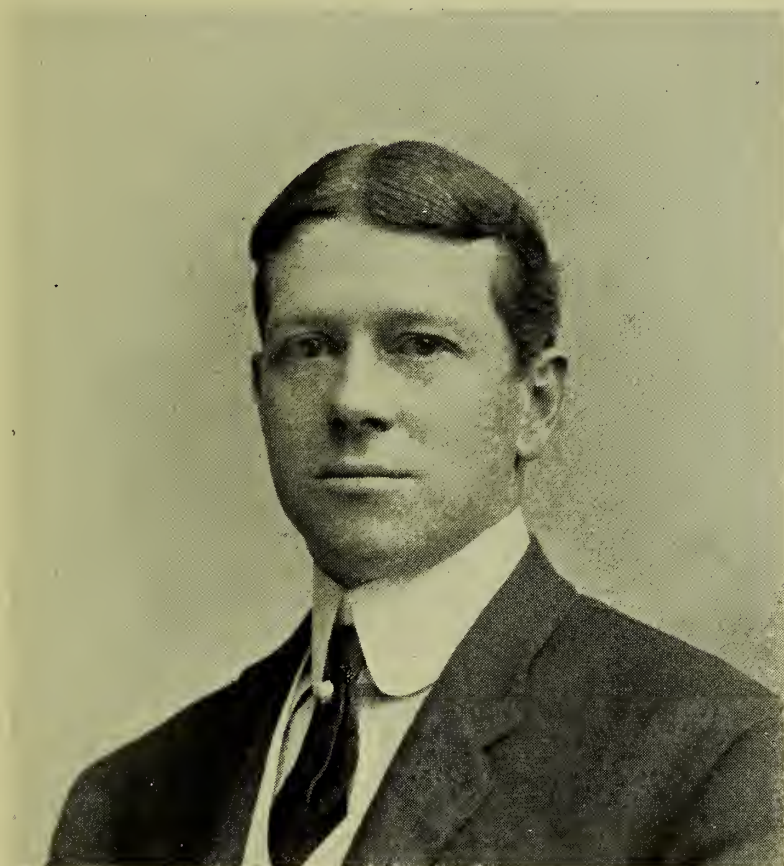
series was remarkable, in that it was sold only by subscription, being the first medical work to be marketed in this way either here or abroad. Through a systematically organized canvass the work was offered to the medical profession not only in the United States, but also to English-speaking physicians throughout the world. It had a very remarkable success.

But more than any previous enterprise, the publication of Wood's Library of Standard Medical Authors marked decisively the inauguration of subscription methods of bookselling as applied to medical works. The series was begun on January 1st, 1879, and involved the monthly issue of important cloth-bound octavo medical books, in yearly sets of twelve volumes. The issue of these series was continued for eight years, and their sale was enormous. The idea was at once adapted by other publishers to various lines of popular and professional literature with equal success.

In 1888 was begun the publication of the "International Encyclopedia of Surgery," in seven royal octavo volumes, edited by Dr. John Ash-

of Publishing

hurst, Jr. This work marked the commencement of international co-operation by American writers in the production of medical and surgical literature, and did much to place America on a



GILBERT C. WOOD

plane with European countries in scientific advancement in these branches.

The "Reference Handbook of the Medical Sciences," edited by Dr. Albert H. Buck, consist-

One Hundred Years

ing of eight imperial octavo volumes, was published during the years from 1885 to 1889, followed by a supplementary volume in 1893. This work was an encyclopedic dictionary of medical



ARNOLD WOOD

and allied topics, consisting of short essays, and was profusely illustrated. It was without question the most popular large medical publication ever produced in any country.

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The "Twentieth Century Practice of Medicine," in twenty large octavo volumes, edited by Dr. Thomas L. Stedman, was begun in 1895 and completed in 1901. It consisted of monographic treatises on all the special topics properly embraced by the domain of general medicine, written by world authorities in the various branches.

A second edition of the "Reference Handbook," almost completely rewritten and bringing the work up to date, has been completed by the publication of the eighth volume, in the present year.

A great number of works, mostly octavos, upon the various topics included under the general term "medicine," have been issued by the house—treatises, text-books, manuals, and essays. To look back for but a few years is to realize with how much better cause we of to-day can echo the proverb as to "making many books."

W. C. W.

PROPERTY OF
PARKE, DAVIS & CO.

